

30th Sunday OT (A)
October 26, 2014
Living in the Kingdom

In our Gospel readings over the last several weeks we have heard parables that likened the Kingdom of God to a wedding feast with unworthy guests....to a landowner who planted a vineyard and leased it out to dishonest tenant farmers...to a man who had two sons...where one son did what the father asked and one that did not... and to a landowner who hired people throughout the day to work the fields... but when evening came he paid them all the same daily wage regardless of how long they worked.

In his repeated preaching about the Kingdom... those around Jesus begin to wonder if he is setting up his own kingdom... and they are worried because the kingdom he describes is so radically different from what they have grown to know.

In the kingdom Jesus describes... the first shall be last... not a comforting message to those who have worked diligently to be the first in line...or to those who have achieved a privileged status and don't want to lose it.

For those who have had responsibility for the kingdom of God... the religious leaders... Jesus says that the kingdom will be taken from them because they have not helped people get into the kingdom... they have actually made it more difficult

...and to those who have accumulated great wealth... the money they have...Caesar's Roman coin... is not the currency that is traded in the kingdom which Jesus proclaims.

All that they have done to be prominent in the kingdom they envision... might actually work against them in the kingdom Jesus proclaims.

I guess that begs the question for each of us...for which kingdom are we preparing...the earthly kingdom or the heavenly kingdom of God? As we have seen in Scripture... Success in one kingdom might not constitute success in the other!

My guess is that we certainly have a vision of what earthly success might be and we probable spend much time and energy pursuing it. But what about success in the Kingdom of God...how do we pursue the Kingdom of God here and now?

In our readings today we get an idea about how we are to live as a follower of Jesus...we are to love God... Love our neighbor... and love God by loving our neighbor.

Jesus tells us that the greatest commandment of the law is that we are to love God with all that we have and are...we are to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. We are to hold nothing back in our love for God... because God holds nothing back in his love for us.

Jesus adds...that the second command of great importance is...to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

While these two great commandment may be easy to understand and because they are familiar words... they may easily roll off our tongues... but for most of us...they are probably a challenge to live out.

Do we love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with our entire mind? Or... Do we love God... with conditions? Do we love God...up to a point...because beyond that point people may talk or...beyond a point God may expect more of me and I'm not sure I want to give God more... are there areas in our life where we do not invite God into because we think that God would not approve? Is love of God a Sunday....a kind of a "Churchy" thing while "business is business" for the rest of the week and the two do not cross paths?

Love of God seems simple...after all...God is God... and it's easy to express love of God when things are going our way...when all is right with the world... but when the storms of life toss us about...when faith and trust are challenged... when all of a sudden

God seems to go silent... unresponsive... and distant... do we doubt...do we question...Do we look for comforting alternatives that are not of God?

The Second great commandment... Love of neighbor... presents challenges of its' own.

Do we really love our neighbor? Do we believe that what is good for me...what I think that I deserve is also what everyone else deserves too...and if we do at least think or say that...do we work to make that happen even if that means we accumulate less?

And who is my neighbor...Do we take the broad view of neighbor ... or... or a narrow view of neighbor. Do we have an ethnic and language bias that defines neighbor? Do we operate within an economic boundary that defines neighbor? Do we have geographic limitations that define neighbor?

Love of brother and sister... love of neighbor near and far...love of co-worker, love of the stranger... even when it is not easy..... is an expression of our love for God... for what you do for the least of these brothers and sisters of your...Jesus says...you do for me.

Our world is constantly changing and sometimes all-consuming and we need to regularly recalibrate our understanding of what God wants of us... and how we love God and neighbor.

Love of God and love of neighbor are the keys to the kingdom of God...and you hold the keys... open the door...let yourself in.